GALILEO: An 'Internetable' Knowledge Source

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Background. Various technologies (e.g., online databases, e-mail, telefacsimile) have been well integrated into health sciences knowledge and information systems. Linking established with emergent technologies (e.g,. Internet, imaging) provides opportunities to rethink collaborative arrangements beyond the traditional health sciences institutions, thus enriching knowledge services for health science professionals. Merging technology with the information, especially using the Internet has been predicted as the "next transformation in the delivery of health care" [1] and is the most effective way to practice evidence based medicine. [2]

In Georgia, the largest state east of the Mississippi, 34 institutions in the University System serve a large rural population as well as diverse urban areas. The GALILEO (Georgia Library Learning Online) statewide library initiative was implemented with $10M in 1995 to provide access to core level materials and information services regardless of geographic location, institution size, or mode of instructional delivery. The objectives of the project are to: provide Internet (PeachNet) access to System libraries, acquire electronic full-text core academic journals, convert all System card catalogs to computer format, provide automation for each System library, support universal borrowing, facilitate sharing research journals, provide electronic access to state census data, and to distribute state publications electronically.

Systems. The online GALILEO system is accessible to all University System affiliates via the Internet using a world wide web browser (currently Netscape is the recommended browser for compatibility). A customized search engine (SOLINET's SiteSearch product) is used to search the majority of the databases and full text information resources which are locally mounted on two mirrored UNIX systems. Other resources are available through vendor server sites using proprietary search engines (e.g., Academic Press, Cambridge Scientific Abstracts). The use of IP filters, or password protection for off campus remote use, provides user authorization and validation to comply with software licensing restrictions.

Evaluation. The assessment of the GALILEO online system is based on the assessment model described in the *Assessment Model for Libraries*, approved by the Regents' Academic Committee on Libraries 1994. Surveys of library directors, library staff and users of the online system will measure the following variables: reliability, access, responsiveness, communication, understanding/knowing the customer, credibility, security, and cost benefit. The results of the survey of library directors showed 100% satisfaction with the database and full text-service provided as part of this project. Surveys of library staff and online database users are being collected during Spring, 1997. User surveys will be collected via a web based form placed on the database entry screen.

Data show that from October 1995 to February 1997, system usage at the Medical College of Georgia (MCG) has tripled and it has doubled for the entire University System of Georgia (USG) (10/95 - MCG logins = 300, USG logins = 52,495; 10/97 - MCG logins = 986, USG logins = 135,214).

Conclusions. GALILEO continues to gain regional and national recognition. It won the 1996 Chancellor's Award for Collaborative Excellence from the University System of Georgia Chancellor Stephen Portch and was one of 20 semi-finalists in the education category for the 1996 Annual National Information Infrastructure Awards from the Department of Commerce. The usefulness of the GALILEO system is best demonstrated by the expansion from the original 34 participants to an additional 130 sites (private higher education institutions, vocational and technical colleges, public libraries, and some K-12 schools), making it a truly statewide, collaborative system.

References

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